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ABSTRACT

The ten articles in this journal report on research and practice in the teaching of writing. Topics covered include sentence combining as a composition technique, peer evaluation in a technical writing class, a plan for teaching paragraph construction, the use of literary humor in a writing class, methods for setting the scene, how students view the writing process, the research paper, planning a writing environment in an elementary school, a structured writing program for the junior high, and a program for teaching writing at the high school level. (FI)

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The Teaching of Writing: Illinois Teachers Report on Research & Practices

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Sentence Combining as a Composition Technique

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Research in the teaching of composition has not proved conclusively that any one method of teaching writing works better than any other. The research which has been done so far, however, does seem to indicate that one method of teaching composition is preferable for producing more mature writing.[1] That method is sentence combining.

Sentence combining may not cure all the ills of immature writing, but if it is used consistently and properly, it will improve the writing of high school and college students. The bibliography following this paper lists the research studies that have been done in this area. Since most of the research favors sentence combining, composition teachers should be acquainted with this technique for teaching writing and may want to use it in their classes.

Though sentence combining is based on the theory of generative-transformational grammar, the composition teacher needs little formal background in this theory in order to teach it. Briefly, sentence combining is based on generative-transformational grammar in two important ways. First, it is based on the assumption, in accordance with the linguistic description of generative-transformational grammar, that all sentences, with the exception of the very basic elemental ones, are made up of two or more underlying "kernel" sentences. For example, a sentence like

(1) The good-looking young girl walks down the street, swinging a red purse.

is derived or transformed from the following underlying kernel sentences:

[1] Among the studies on sentence combining, the following are the most useful: Daiper, et al.; Elley, et al.; Mellon, and O'Hare 1973.

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(2) The girl walks down the street.
(3) The girl is good-looking.
(4) The girl is young.
(5) The girl is swinging a purse.
(6) The purse is red.

Secondly, it is also based on the assumption that the speakers of a language have an intuitive or unconscious knowledge of their language which enables them not only to understand sentence (1) in terms of sentences (2)-(6) but also to be aware of sylistic options, that is, that sentences (2)-(6) can also be transformed into several other forms such as, among others,

(7) The girl who is good-looking and young walks down the street, swinging a red purse.
(8) Swinging a red purse, the good-looking young girl walks down the street.
(9) Swinging a purse which is red, the good-looking young girl walks down the street.
(10) Down the street walks the good-looking young girl swinging a red purse.

Thus, sentence-combining exercises provide students of composition an excellent opportunity to practice the generation of mature sentences, not only singly but also in paragraphs and essays, by using the internalized knowledge that they have of their language and by raising their consciousness of stylistic options in written expression. Sentence-combining exercises are, in essence, a pedagogical application of the theory of generative-transformational grammar to the teaching of writing without teaching the grammatical terminology or format of the theory. Thus, a major advantage for teachers of composition is that they can use sentence combining without possessing a sophisticated knowledge of the theory and format of generative-transformational grammar.

Using sentence combining in the classroom is really very simple. The most important thing to remember, as both Strong and O'Hare stress in their introductions to their texts, is that there are no single right answers to any sentence-combining exercise. What the teacher must bear in mind while doing the exercises is that the students will be able to see for themselves what good sentence structure is. It takes faith to try teaching sentence combining by letting the students use their own judgments because all good teachers of composition have for so long thought that they have better choices to offer students than the students can come up with by themselves. Once the teacher has accepted the fact that it really

is possible to let the students decide for themselves what sounds best, sentence combining is off to a rousing start.

Here is the way that it is done. A one-sentence exercise is presented as a cluster of kernel sentences like the following:

(11) The student was a boy.
(12) The student was lonely.
(13) The student had spent hours.
(14) The hours were long.
(15) The student was alone.
(16) The student was in the library.

First, the teacher might ask the students to combine the sentences out loud while either the teacher or a member of the class writes the suggested combinations on the board. For each cluster of sentences there may be as many as thirty possible answers, so it is possible to get many choices from a class. The class will soon see that some sentences are more appropriate or euphonious than others. Even in matters of punctuation, it is often not necessary to make corrections. For instance, to combine sentences (11)-(16), someone may come up with:

(17) The student was a lonely boy he spent long hours in the library.

Chances are that someone else will correct the run-on before the teacher has an opportunity to mention the sentence error. If no one mentions the error, it is always possible to ask if there is not another way to do the same sentence. Indirect suggestions from the teacher, such as giving the cue word *who*, will be sure to produce the obvious solution to the sentence error, resulting in:

(18) The student was a lonely boy who spent long hours alone in the library.

The next step is to let students write their own combinations, either alone or in small groups. Groups can work together, then recombine as a class to compare finished work. Usually this method will produce lively competition for the best sentence combinations. Talking about the choices is extremely important. Though a teacher should not dictate the best possible answers, it is quite important that students discuss the sentences they have generated and that they have a chance to see other ways in which the same sentences could be combined. With enough discussion, even the slowest student will soon begin to see that there are better choices for a variety of rhetorical situations without the teacher's having to dictate a single precept.

Formal materials for sentence combining are limited, but there are two good texts available (O'Hare 1975 and Strong 1973). The former contains exercises for combining kernel sentences into single sentences, usually with clue words given or transformations suggested, and is ideal for beginning work in sentence combining. The latter contains exercises with clusters of kernel sentences which are to be combined into single sentences, and each exercise results in a paragraph or a short essay. In this text, very few clues or particular transformations are given so that students are free to combine the sentences as they see fit. The composition teacher may also, of course, choose to make up sentence-combining exercises by breaking down any paragraph or short essay into kernel sentences for the class to work with.

Sentence combining, of course, is not the only composition technique that a teacher should use.[2] It is a method of teaching students to look for and listen to the best way to say things not only in sentence-combining exercises but also in their own writing. However, if students do not have enough practice, the process might not be so effective. In general, forty to sixty minutes per week would be about the right amount of time to spend on sentence combining. Along with sentence combining, the class may also be doing many other activities. The teacher may wish to emphasize modes in composition or any other system for developing essays. The students should be writing their own essays and revising those essays, as well as being exposed to rhetorical models.

The various methods that one uses in a rhetoric class are still in order. What the sentence combining replaces and should replace, according to the findings of the available research, is the grammar and usage exercises that one often finds in workbooks. Many students leave high school and go to college "workbooked" to death. Those students are very good at finding the subject-verb agreement errors in a given exercise, but they may still end up with such errors in their own writing. The trouble with doing workbook exercises is that there is often no carry over to the students' own writing. Since sentence-combining exercises do not have any single right answers, students have to learn to look critically at all sentences. When students generate their own paragraphs and essays, they should use the same principles that they have learned in the sentence-combining exercises in their revisions. The teacher

[2] However, Daiper, et al., claim that a composition program consisting entirely of sentence-combining exercises in various forms can effectively teach all aspects of composition.

can then hope to produce students who think about what they write and how that writing communicates.

Sentence combining is fun to teach and to learn. That it is fun for both the teacher and the student does not seem to detract from its effectiveness at all. With enough sentence-combining exercises and some lively discussion, students and teachers will find that writing can be considerably improved.

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Peer Evaluation in a Technical Writing Class

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I suspect that almost every instructor of composition has at one time or another used peer evaluation of student papers as a fruitful class activity; nevertheless, I would like to remind those who find themselves teaching classes in technical report writing how useful and popular the activity can be. I find that passing student work is popular with the students, is very little trouble for the instructor, and is of great value to both in evaluating how well students understand various important considerations of effective technical communication.

First I must explain the mechanics of the way in which I, for example, handle the activity. I assign a short paper which demonstrates a solid grasp of whatever strategy is under investigation. I encourage the use of any appropriate visuals, but these are supplementary to the page and a half or so of text which I require. I do not always notify the class of my intentions for the next class period. I find that students who do not always get their work in on time, those who often benefit must from such an activity, often choose to skip an evaluation session. They fail to realize that although they may not have brought an assignment to be read, their criticism is valuable in helping themselves and others to grasp the concepts of effective communication.

On the due date, I immediately collect the papers and attach cover sheets, usually recycled memos. Next I distribute the papers at random to the class, warning the students to tell me if they receive their own. Then I instruct the students to read the paper they have been given and to comment on the cover sheet about the value

of the paper as technical writing and as an example of the strategy under investigation. I ask them further to assign a grade, usually a numerical value of one to five, since I believe students are less hesitant to grade honestly than they would be if required to give a letter grade. I do not ask the graders to sign their names because doing so might jeopardize their honest appraisal of the paper. After one student completes a critique, the paper is passed to another student who has finished a first evaluation. The papers are moved in this way, care being taken to insure that no one reader evaluates the same paper twice. When each cover sheet has five comments and grades on it, the paper is returned to its author, who must, in turn, provide comments and a grade, while discovering what his/her peers consider effective or not effective about the paper. At the end of the hour I collect the papers to provide the last comment and grade on the cover sheet as well as to provide the corrective editing I give every written assignment. I am careful to read the paper before I read the student comments. I do not want to prejudice my evaluation of the paper. I do find, nevertheless, that the comments often cause me to reevaluate my opinion and justify the grade I have assigned.

My students have always seemed to enjoy this activity. It is a break from the usual lecture/discussion sessions. It introduces them to other fields and to aspects of their own fields with which they may be unfamiliar. It gives them ideas for ways in which they can treat assignments and it demonstrates to them how they could have better handled the current work. In viewing the mistakes of other students in the class, the students are able to recognize their own faults; reading the comments on the cover sheet allows them to achieve a certain distance from their own work, which allows them to judge more objectively the effectiveness of their communication. The students enjoy that masochistic, narcissistic satisfaction of discovering what other people think of their expression.

I find that the activity of passing papers for peer evaluation aids me greatly in establishing that technical communications must be aimed at a specific audience. The activity establishes a larger audience for class assignments than just the person who stands before them class period after class period. They are able to see the consequences of distributing a piece of writing to both those who are very knowledgeable in the author's field and those who have no substantial knowledge at all of that area. The results of soliciting student comments and grades demonstrate to the class that the grades I give are not given capriciously. The exercise establishes

that grammar, composition and visual standards which I advocate are actually important to effective communication.

Aid in establishing the importance of considering the audience is not the only aid the activity provides. I learn through the comments on the cover sheets whether most of the class has grasped the key points in communications theory I have tried to teach them. At times the comments provide expert criticism of aspects of the various fields with which I may not be familiar. The grades and comments provide me with a check of my grading system, to inform me if I have been concentrating on teaching the avoidance of those aspects which truly hamper communication. Then again, there are times when the student comments point out mistakes I missed in my correcting of the paper.

I find little problem in this activity. Although there is always the chance that friends might grade each other higher than they should, the fact that my grade is still the one that goes in the gradebook usually makes the student graders give their honest opinions. I have discovered little malice on the part of one student for another in the grading chore. Honest evaluation generally wins out. To the occasional student who objects to having his/her work shown to others, I have only to point out that the class is one in communication. Of course, there is always some amount of boredom that occurs as the student waits to receive another paper. If several people have not brought their assignments to class this is worsened since I require all who are in class to participate in the evaluation process. Therefore, I encourage those who are without papers for some time to read the next text assignment. I find that most of the students are eager to see more papers and most go out of their way to make sure they are given more to look at when the opportunity arises. I find that most papers receive specific and extensive comments, usually only the clearly excellent ones receiving less than their share. I also find that students do not always simply follow the lead of the first evaluation. For the most part, while they may stay within a two-point range, the graders have no compunction against disagreeing with former graders.

Most of the students take this passing of papers seriously and very conscientiously. I continue to be amazed at their perceptiveness and at their honesty in the task of peer evaluation.

A Painless Plan for Teaching the Paragraph

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"Ohhh," I groaned one day over the lunch table. "How am I ever going to cope with a theme a day from fifty kids this year when I had trouble with thirty last year?" The memory of poring night after night over those one-paragraph themes from brighter freshmen was already haunting me. And I hadn't even begun the required composition teaching.

"Why not have the kids read their themes aloud in class?" suggested a friend whose name shall be forever blessed.

What a wonderful idea, I thought, but it will never work. How can anybody teach composition by reading aloud? But that surely is a great idea. *Could* it work was my next question. And from there I went on to ask how it could work so that the students would write and I would have less to read and grade, yet still be sure that they would benefit from the process. Maybe the most anyone could ever do for them would be to make them good judges — good readers — of what was appropriate and what was not. Could that be accomplished by reading themes aloud? Of course. A better reader makes a better writer. They simply had to be taught *how* to judge. And by reading aloud, each student would be exposed to many more themes than possible if only his/her own writing were involved. Since I tend to do everything in depth, I would have to set aside all else and "do" composition for a couple of weeks. I knew I would have to give students criteria on how to judge a paragraph and I would have to create a classroom climate in which this judging could be done constructively. I muddled over a solution. And I think I muddled into one that works.

The first part — getting the criteria — was easy. I wrote a checklist which encompassed the many things I hoped students would learn but which could also be used to judge their own and anyone else's compositions. This checklist was passed out in class and we spent a period discussing the items. The second part — the judging — began with the tudents writing only rough drafts, which relieved them of the necessity of coping with many mechanical problems and allowed them to concentrate on content. They were told that their rought drafts would be checked in every day and that they had to have a paragraph ready to read if called on. No grades

1 English Humanities - East School - Ms. Ichkoff
Checklist for One-paragraph themes

Topic
Is subject narrow enough?
Too broad? Can I write about a small area of a large topic?

Topic Sentence
Subject?
Attitude?

Method of Development
Would the subject be best expressed in a paragraph of question, contrast, reason, definition, examples, description . . . etc.?

Body of Paragraph
Am I following method of development?
Have I used at least nine sentences?
Is there movement in the paragraph which takes the reader from point to point, idea to idea?

Ending
Have I used a clincher sentence?
Is the reader left with a sense of finality? (Does he know I'm through with what I said?)

Title
Grabber?
A phrase rather than a sentence?
Capitalized and punctuated properly?

Overall
Is information presented clearly?
Is it explained sufficiently?
Are conclusions (attitutdes) justifiable on the basis of evidence presented?
Is the order in which it is presented logical? (Contradictions?)
Is the point of view appropriate and consistent?
Does the paragraph have a sense of unity?
Are statements specific enough? (Too general?)
Is tone appropriate for audience?
Is tone appropriate for subject?
Do the verbs move the sentence?
Have I avoided "it"?

Mechanical
Spelling - no-excuse and in general?
Run-on sentences?
Comma splices?
Fragments?
Errors in grammar? (Agreement, capitalization, punctuation, etc.)
Clear pronoun references?
Sentence variety?
Transitions?

Scale of Value

5 points for rough draft with evidence of revision	
5 points maximum for a grabber title	
3 points maximum for an opening sentence that sets up the paragraph	A = 31 - 35
15 points maximum for specific development	B = 26 - 30
2 points maximum for clincher sentence	C = 21 - 25
5 points maximum for perfect mechanics	D = 16 - 20
35 points for a perfect paper	

would be given, but a student who did not turn in a rough draft would be penalized by receiving a failing mark for the day. I explained to them that it was much more important for them to write than it was for me to read every word they wrote. They accepted this treatment as fair. (The students in these classes had already

Name_____
1 English Humanities H Mods_____
Mr. Ickkoff
Date _____

One-paragraph Expository Theme

In the space below you are to write a rough draft of one of the types of paragraphs we have studied. Indicate the type in the blank that follows:_____
Give your paragraph a title. You will be graded as follows:

A = 31 - 35
B = 26 - 30
C = 21 - 25
D = 16 - 20

_____ 5 points maximum for rough draft with evidence of much revision
_____ 5 points maximum for a grabber title
_____ 3 points maximum for an opening sentence that sets up the paragraph
_____ 15 points maximum for specific development of at least nine sentences that follow the appropriate type
_____ 2 points maximum for clincher sentence
_____ 5 points maximum for perfect mechanics, including manuscript form, H. E. spelling, and complete sentences
_____
_____ 35 points for a perfect paper

*One point will be deducted for each and every sentence that begins with "it" or "there" and one point will be deducted for each and every use of any form of "you."

_____

If you need more room, use the other side or attach extra sheets. Turn these in with your finished copy, but do not staple the rough draft(s) and finished copy together.

written personal journals and narrative prose, so I had some sense of their capability.)

Before the first rough draft assignment, we read about various types of paragraphs in grammar books. I adapted materials for use as examples of single paragraphs, complete in themselves. The checklist covering all the elements in the paragraph was distributed and became the basis for planning discussion. We went over this checklist carefully. It covered mostly review material, but we

talked about what subjects would be appropriate for a one-paragraph theme. The students quickly saw, for instance, that they could not write about the whole school, but that they could write about their locker. I emphasized the choice of topic as the single most important decision they would make, reminding them that if they wrote from a positive choice rather than with a negative "I don't want to write about this and I don't want to write about that" attitude, they would always be more interested in what they were saying, have more to say, and consequently write a much more interesting theme. The rest of the items on the checklist were discussed in as much detail as any class felt it needed for understanding. These two activities, discussing a topic and the checklist, took two days. An assignment sheet covering the unit (two to three weeks) was distributed and we were ready to go.

A rough draft of a paragraph of description was the first assignment. We had studied poetry and imagery in previous units, so this descriptive paragraph was to be directed toward one of the senses. The most important thing that had to happen before that first paragraph was read aloud was setting the tone. "Any criticism you make must be constructive," I told the students. "You can tell a person what is wrong and why, but you must also offer that person a way to 'fix' what you're criticizing."

Using rough drafts for this stage gives the writing a sense of "becoming" rather than "being." Students have not labored over beautiful, finished copies they know someone will revise. Instead they have written something that is in the process of changing, and their egos are much less involved in any criticism that might occur. I think this process is important as another unobtrusive step in setting the tone.

The next step puts me in control of the first criticisms. I react to the first few paragraphs myself, carefully choosing writing from students who are more able and more secure. This is a crucial step, for the teacher must do a competent critical job. First the student reads the composition. Then, using the checklist almost verbatim, I begin. Because I have chosen carefully, most of the initial questions I ask and answer about the composition can be answered positively; this device helps the student achieve a sense of self-confidence so that suggestions for improvement that come at the end of the critique rest on a sense of accomplishment. Sometimes I ask the student to read certain sections again to refresh my memory. I then comment on these and explain why I wanted them repeated.

These comments must be constructive, for here is where the revision takes place and the method of the revision as well as its

purpose must be clear to the students. For instance, if a student writes sentences which repeat the same pattern, the opportunity presents itself for a brief lecture on sentence variety and movement. An unreferenced pronoun becomes a blessing as students begin to understand collectively why they can't understand what the writer has not explained. A sense of security creeps over the class as they realize that the errors of their peers are common but correctible. "Gee," they say, "how simple it is to fix things like that once you know how."

But I've gotten ahead. The second carefully-chosen reader repeats the process. Again I ask and answer questions taken from the checklist. When the third reader finishes, I ask him/her to respond to the questions and begin encouraging the rest of the class to participate in the question-asking process.

At the fourth paragraph I turn the entire job over to the class. Should they fail to take note of some major problem in the paragraph, I ask the student to reread a certain section and ask a leading question or two. And so it goes, day after day for two to three weeks, with students writing a variety of paragraphs.

In a forty-minute period we can usually get through at least seven paragraphs. I deliberately do not try to do everything for every paragraph or for every student. Several focussed comments serve a better function than picking apart and correcting each error.

I know I have succeeded when students vie with each other to read that day, ask when it is their turn again, or stop after class to ask me to *please* read their paragraph for that day. Their pride makes me proud. And sometimes someone reads a paragraph that is so well done that there is spontaneous applause.

All this reading and commenting leads to a lot of revising, too. A student comments that the second sentence doesn't follow the first or that something didn't sound just right. A rereading brings to light a shift in tense, person, or tone. Sometimes rereading the first and last sentences to see if there is movement in the paragraph and if the writer has indeed taken the audience from the beginning to the end produces the discovery that there are two or more paragraphs present or that the writer has left out important information the reader needs to know. One of my favorite student comments was this one: "There's something wrong with the paragraph. It leaps instead of glides." Thereafter, that class worked very hard for "gliding" paragraphs.

At the end of two weeks of this work a student has been exposed to ten of his/her own paragraphs, three of which have been care-

fully evaluated, plus about seventy others from classmates. And I have been busily grading the backlog of papers from another course I teach.

This exercise culminates in the preparation of a final, formal, finished one-paragraph theme that *will* be graded — both by another student and by me. I hand out a ditto with instructions for the paragraph on which the rough draft will be written. This ditto becomes the format for all one-paragraph themes written during the year, setting up the point system for grading that is followed in general no matter what the one-paragraph theme assignment. Six areas are identified for which a student receives points. The points listed are maximum and it is up to the evaluator (another student or me) to decide how many will be awarded.

The first area is the rough draft, which must show evidence of revision (hopefully, based on all the oral revision that has gone on in class) in order to receive the full five points. The second is the "grabber" title that makes the reader want to go on. In oral work, we grade titles on a scale of one to five. Pretty soon the students become aware of what a "five pointer" is. The opening sentence that sets up the paragraph can receive up to three points. The ideas of interesting the reader and telling the reader what to expect are stressed here rather than the topic sentence as such. Up to fifteen points can be earned for specific development.

These points can be rearranged in order to emphasize some particular feature. For instance, in a paragraph of description, five of the fifteen might be awarded for successful use of a metaphor. Or those five points might be awarded for a sentence using parallel structure. The concluding sentence that leaves the reader with a sense of finality is worth up to two points. Mechanics and grammar account for five points. Depending on individual goals, these points are adjusted and readjusted.

At any rate, the students arrive in class on the day the final paragraph is assigned with the beautifully copied and edited sheets in their hands. I collect these along with the rough draft dittos and redistribute them to other members of the class. I try to match abilities so that a student is grading a paper of another student who is doing roughly the same calibre work.

The students then grade each other's papers, filling in the points on the lines of the rough draft. They must justify with comments any point deductions they make. I explain to them that an "A" paper doesn't need much commentary but a "C" paper needs their help in order to make it an "A" paper. Rushing back and forth for dictionaries, consulting grammar handbooks, testing for sentence

completeness follows. They suddenly discover they can't read another's handwriting and rail at the student for illegibility. I remind them that the purpose of writing is to communicate. A student calls me over to tell me the total points for a paper just read equal a "C" but that the student really deserves an "A" for trying so hard. I use the analogy of the baseball player who tries so hard to get a hit but gets three strikes instead and ask whether the player is then on first base or on the bench. They get the point. The papers are collected without being returned to their owners, and then it's my turn to give them a final grading.

I carefully read this last of eleven paragraphs the student has written. I also scrutinize the comments of the evaluator whose signature appears on the paper. I add my own evaluation, agreeing or disagreeing with the student evaluator and, again, give reasons for any point deductions. On the day papers are returned to students, time must be allowed for conferences with the evaluator and with me so that any misunderstandings, disagreements, or complaints can be dealt with. The arrived-at letter grade is entered in the grade book and becomes the student's grade for the unit. (Adjustments may need to be made for students who have failed to do rough drafts daily.)

From here the lesson expands or contracts. If students have successfully mastered most of the points of the one-paragraph theme, then it's easy to go on assigning additional paragraphs that can be graded using the ditto form of the rough draft with points. In-class evaluation by other students should follow. Instructions at the top of the ditto will, of course, reflect what is to be stressed. If there needs to be more teaching, perhaps another week can be devoted to oral grading. If a week is too much time, then at least the number of days it takes to get around once to each student should be set aside.

This exercise creates a sense of community. Students find out a great deal about each other from the paper topics. One student wrote all his eleven paragraphs of reason, description, and example about food. Another specialized in animal paragraphs, while a third cose various aspects of baby sitting. Most students develop more variety. Something interesting I noticed from reading the second set of formal paragraphs was that the grader was very carefully marking another student's paper for any fault the grader might have committed on the first paragraph. I was encouraged. I was even more encouraged when the sophomore teachers told me that the students I had taught freshman year were writing good paragraphs. They were off the bench.

Literary Humor in a Writing Class: A Follow-Up Report

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Some who read my article "Literary Humor: Readings to Enliven English Class," which appeared in the *Illinois English Bulletin*, Fall, 1977, were curious. I assume some were skeptical. Is such a course worthwhile? Is it practical? Would students approve of the choice of readings as outlined? Would they accept literary humor as a base for a serious course in expository writing? Since I had never tried this approach, to be frank, I myself was curious to see if this brain child, thought out during a sabbatical, would work as well in practice as it did in theory. So I taught the course during the spring semester at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. What you are about to read is my evaluation together with excerpts from student evaluations of the class made at the end of the semester.

One young women wrote: "Many students judge the value of a textbook according to size, difficulty, and cost. To be worthwhile, the book must be hard-covered, contain at least thirty chapters, each one more incomprehensible from its predecessor, and be in the over-$10 bracket. The texts for Rhetoric 143 fulfill none of the above requirements; Rhet 143 must be a useless course, right? Dead wrong. (Sorry about that, Folletts!)"

Another student cited the advantage of short essays for prewriting motivation: "I could sit down and read through an essay uninterrupted, with the fringe benefit of having plenty of time remaining for re-reading. As a result there was better opportunity to learn and less of a chance to make careless mistakes and misinterpretations. The essays we have been reading in class are exquisite examples. They have provided a unique education in writing. They have succeeded in demonstrating writing styles with humor, they have encouraged reader interest, and they have diminished the fear of attempting to create essays on our own."

These student opinions bear out what I had hoped would be the case when I drew up plans for teaching expository writing by using literary humor as models.

If you have read last fall's issue of the *Illinois English Bulletin*, you may remember Part One of this study in which I outlined its scope, defined humor, and included a reading list of essays which

could be used in class. At the beginning of the semester I presented this *Bulletin* to the class and at the same time I emphasized that "humor goes far beyond, is far deeper, than varieties of infantile, drunken, hysterical, or nonsense laughter." This idea was strange to many of the students, but the more they read, the more they came to realize that humor may deal with politics, sex, and social mores; it may also deal with religion and philosophy.

At the outset of Rhetoric 143, students were given a list of forty-four selections for class study. The list included essays by George Ade, Woody Allen, Max Beerbohm, Robert Benchley, Art Buchwald, Stuart Chase, Irvin S. Cobb, Stephen Leacock, H. L. Mencken, Mike Royko, Jonathan Swift, James Thurber, Mark Twain, and Voltaire (for a complete listing, see Fall, 1977, *Illinois English Bulletin*).

Since these essays were published in scattered sources such as individual books, magazines, and newspapers, one of the problems was the distribution of materials. To overcome this difficulty, I asked one student to be responsible for redistributing the readings at the beginning of each session. She handled this task with a minimum of confusion and kept an accurate record of the readers of each given essay and the dates of their reading. The class found it essential to take careful notes, jotting down thoughts and memorable phrases of the authors.

At the beginning of the semester I indicated to the students that they were enrolled in a class in expository writing, as distinguished from one in the writing of fiction or poetry. I informed them that the main emphasis in the course was to be their own writing, that the basis for such writing would be their reading from a selected list of essays, and that during the semester they would write from twelve to fourteen papers with the average length of five hundred words. These papers would be carefully evaluated by the instructor and might be used for class discussion. Mistakes in grammar, usage, and composition would be pointed out, and rewriting would be required when necessary.

At this point some of the students began to yawn; it all seemed like the same old story they had heard many times before. But as the class progressed, it became evident that the reading of humorous essays made all of the difference.

As it turned out, students were enthusiastic with this approach. One assessment was typical: "My previous rhetoric classes have all had one point in common — constant boredom. Besides the bimonthly class theme, nothing really held my attention and urged me to stay in class."

If it is true that restraint and sometimes propriety result in

tasteless and ineffective writing, then it follows that freedom and naturalness produce flavor in writing. This is a matter of letting the temperament or present mood of the author appear in his writing, of letting his feeling about the material be apparent. This is one of the finest attributes of the students' essays in my class. One student whose writing became much more colorful as the semester progressed said, "Before this class I never allowed my personality to shine through the material in my papers, but at the close of the semester I find my personality reflected in everything I write."

Students were also impressed with the many different approaches used by humorists in treating a single subject. During the semester, for example, the class read several essays that dealt with love. Among them were Earl Brill's, "Sex Is Dead," George Ade's, "The Fable of the Adult Girl Who Got Busy Before They Could Ring the Bell on Her," Tom Wolfe's, "Thursday Morning in a New York Subway Station," James Thurber's, "Courtship Through the Ages," and Helen Lawrenson's, "Latins Are Lousy Lovers." With all of these examples in front of them, any lecture I could give on style with its built-in features of clarity, grace, rhythm, and variety would have been superfluous. A student pointed out that humor is something that almost everybody can relate to. The readings are less difficult because the reader can become involved with little effort and still reap the benefits that well-rounded literature provides.

As I look back over a lifetime of teaching, it becomes obvious to me that I have, in the past, spent too much time lecturing suggestions for effective writing when I should have had the class concentrate on the study of pertinent examples. For instance, this past semester in teaching descriptive writing I had the class read Lee Strout White's "Farewell, My Lovely," which is not about a woman but about the passing of the Model-T Ford. Another effective model was Jean Stafford's "Can Ed and Me," wherein the author described her exasperation at failure to get her power bill corrected. When she finally got a company representative on the phone, she asked him to hold the line — on the pretext of answering the doorbell — and then she made *him* wait while she went to the kitchen, made a bacon and tomato sandwich, worked the daily crossword puzzle, combed the cat, and sterilized a few Mason jars for canning watermelon pickles. Students learned from these and similar comic sketches that if they were to write effective description, they could not hint at details in a general way; if they would expect their readers to visualize the scene, they would have to make their writing tangible and specific.

Through example the students became increasingly aware of the

power of words and their ability to encompass the whole of human experience. They came to realize that the ability to use a word that expresses exactly the meaning they wish to convey presupposes that they have a vocabulary large enough to provide for freedom of choice. Students found this fact amply illustrated when they read George Ade's "The Fable of the Preacher Who Flew His Kite, but Not Because He Wished to Do So." Here, as a student pointed out, the irony of the situation was evident when the preacher switched from a simple diction which the entire congregation could understand, but didn't appreciate, to sentences that didn't mean anything read from either direction, but which the parishioners loved.

It is a sad but true fact that many students come to the university with the idea firmly entrenched that the bigger words they can employ in their writing, the better the paper. As a partial cure for this misconception, I had the class read Samuel T. Williamson's "How To Write Like a Social Scientist," and Stuart Chase's "Gobbledygook." By the time the students had spent time trying to translate the many examples of pedantic language in these essays, they were convinced that a simple, well-chosen word was the one they would seek. The class thought the examples of gobbledygook amusing but they weren't at all surprised at this type of writing because of the many examples of cloudy and confusing words they had come across in their college texts.

I could go on and on dealing with various points about language and style which can be illustrated in readings of literary humor, but that is not my purpose. Suffice it to say that student evaluations tended to support my belief that such readings can provide a useful and enjoyable focus for a course in composition. Now, in surveying the course, I would make the following overall judgments:

1. The assignments grew naturally out of the readings, which were meaningful to the students and well within their grasp.
2. Students were able, by and large, to get inside the subjects and were able to compare their treatment with that of the models they had been studying.
3. There was more freedom of expression than one ordinarily sees in student papers.
4. The rhythm of the prose was for the most part agreeable.
5. Students' interest in writing was not influenced by their study of grammar and usage, although as the semester progressed they became more conscious of correctness of expression.
6. The readings in the course made all of the difference.

Setting the Scene

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First impressions are important, particularly in a required composition course. An enthusiastic teacher attitude and a writing assignment that encourages thoughtful creativity can initiate a productive rapport that will survive "difficult times" and produce effective, correct writers.

I begin my classes with a "creative potential" assignment that I make clear will not be graded but will be used to pin-point common errors and weaknesses as well as strengths. While moving about the classroom animatedly suggesting approaches to each topic, I encourage students to think creatively. Spotlighting divergent ideas rather than the "tried and true," I attempt from the first day to elicit clever and unique pieces of writing. Sensing that the teacher values diversity and originality, students will venture the path "less traveled by."

There are many topics that will accomplish this objective, but I've found the following questions particularly effective in eliciting written response:

a. If you had one wish that was guaranteed to be granted, what would it be and why?
b. If you could change places with anyone in the world, who would it be and why?
c. When you daydream, what are the most common elements of your dreams?
d. What was the most exciting, most interesting, or most influential incident in your life thus far?
e. What do you have that nobody else has?

When the compositions are completed, I read and evaluate them carefully, noting strengths and weaknesses. The papers are returned for student perusal and then placed in a file. At the end of the course students repeat the initial assignment and compare their first and final efforts. The enthusiasm and satisfaction of the students who can see marked improvement are pluses for my class. In addition, these papers are persuasive evaluative tools for teachers and parents, and they can be the beginning of a permanent file that each student takes with him to his next English class.

How Do Students View the Writing Process?

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Have you ever wondered what your students feel when they sit down to write a paper for your class? Have you wondered what they think when you give back a graded paper? Do you ever wonder if the comments you write on their papers make an impression on them? The English faculty at the University of Illinois High School, Urbana, believed that their students were full of confidence about their writing. Pridefully, we assumed that because we had given our students good training in writing, and because we took time to discuss their writing with them they would feel more confident than students who did not have this experience. We also believed that students who weren't as lucky as ours would feel less secure and confident. Let us tell you how wrong we were.

In the Fall of 1973, University High School initiated an innovative program for 60 seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students. Traditional classroom instruction was abandoned for these students, and they pursued individualized projects. Except for two advisors and a few graduate assistants, the students had little contact with us classroom teachers, and we were given no direct responsibility for teaching them.

The assumption behind this innovative program was that some students have sufficient interests and skills to investigate problems on their own, provided they are given enough time. It was hypothesized that students, pursuing their own interests, would find the educational process more useful and interesting than when participating in the conventional classroom setting.

By the Fall of 1974, twenty of the ninth grade students and some of the eighth grade students in the new program were passed on to the tenth grade, where they entered the customary college-entrance curriculum. Several of us permanent staff members were teaching these students for the first time. We noted that they seemed unsure of themselves, particularly when they were required to write an essay. Some of the students expressed the fear that they would be unable to produce good work in an organized class,

after spending a year without English classes or without doing much writing.

Some of us saw this behavior as being different from the attitude of most University High School students. Therefore, we hypothesized that students who had experienced a sequential program in expository and argumentative writing would be more self-confident about their writing ability and the writing process than those who had gaps in composition instruction.

Because we wanted to test our hypothesis, we developed and pre-tested a 46-item inventory on writing attitudes for University High School students in the Spring of 1974. Since one of us was taking a graduate course in statistics, we decided to use the inventory for a statistics project. Therefore, a separate analysis of variance was performed on the data for each of the statements. To our dismay, the statistical analysis showed no significant differences by grade level or by sex in the students' attitude about writing: There were no differences between those who had had a five-year sequential program and those who had had no instruction for a full year. Our original hypothesis was wrong.

Even though we had found out what we wanted to know, we decided to do further work with the inventory. We preformed a factor analysis which resulted in grouping the items into five factors:

(1) Comments that describe the degree of confidence about the writing process.
(2) Comments that describe improvement in the writing process.
(3) Comments that show a negative feeling about self or the grader.
(4) Comments that express the feeling that the paper is part of self so that a good grade makes one feel worthy and a bad grade makes one feel defeated.
(5) Comments that express the importance of grades.

Using the results of the factor analysis, we revised the instrument, reducing the number of items to 38. Since we had discovered that there were no significant differences among University High students, we decided to see if there were any similarities and differences in the way students from two small schools perceived the writing process. We persuaded the English staff and principal of Fisher High School, located 20 miles north of Urbana, to participate in our research. Situated in Fisher, a community of 1300, the high school has a stable school population of 270 students. Many parents are employed in farming or farm-related industries, but

many also commute to Champaign-Urbana to work for the University of Illinois. The community has a number of retired Air Force personnel, some of whom continue to work at Chanute Air Force Base, Rantoul.

The composition program at Fisher High School emphasizes paragraph structure and book reports in the ninth grade; the informal essay in the tenth; and the research paper, outlining, and thesis statements in the eleventh. Only half of the graduating class takes twelfth grade English because only three years of English are required for graduation.

University High School is a five-grade junior-and-senior high school with a selected enrollment of 160 students. Students are selected on the basis of their test scores in math and reading. The median IQ is unusually high, and students ordinarily come from homes where a great deal of emphasis is placed on educational achievement. Ninety-five percent of the students who enter as seventh graders graduate from University High.

The composition curriculum is sequential, and students are held accountable for using skills that they have learned in previous grades and courses. The student-teacher ratio is low; thus English teachers have time to comment on the students' papers and confer with students. The program includes instruction in semantics and logic, with emphasis on outlining and purposeful writing. Four years of senior-high English is required for graduation.

We thought it logical to assume that because University High had a sequential program, a select student body, and a low student-teacher ratio that our students would feel more confidence in writing than the Fisher High School students. That, we discovered, was not the case.

In the Fall of 1974, we administered the revised inventory at University High and Fisher High Schools. After performing analyses of variance on the data, we found no patterns of differences in the way students from two small schools perceived the writing process. For the second time, we were forced to eat our words — the two sets of students felt about the same way about the writing process. It seems that kids are kids, no matter who or where they are.

A factor analysis yielded a grouping of the items by the same factors as before, but three of the factors appeared stronger than the rest: (1) Comments that describe the degree of confidence about the writing process, (2) Comments that describe improvement in the writing process, and (3) Comments that show a negative feeling about self or grader. On this basis, we revised the

writing attitude inventory for the third time, reducing the number of items to 22.

After we were forced to acknowledge that our two hypotheses were wrong, our next question was: What could we do with an inventory that was carefully tested, analyzed, and computerized? We realized that through the process we had learned a great deal about individual students. We knew which students took our written comments as a personal affront, and we knew which students felt good about writing. Therefore, we surmised that teachers might wish to use this inventory to diagnose *their* students' confidence in the writing process.

It is obvious that further research is necessary before any conclusions can be drawn about the effect of an organized course on student confidence about writing. However, the writing attitude inventory, resulting from this study, can be a useful instrument for you, the classroom teacher. It can be useful in identifying those students who have fears about your paper grading and in learning who the confident students are in your classes.

WRITING ATTITUDE INVENTORY

For each of the following statements circle a number on the answer sheet [1 (never) 2 (seldom) 3 (sometimes) 4 (usually) 5 (always)] that most precisely describes your feelings and perceptions about yourself in relation to your essays and writing assignments for English classes.

1. I have a better opinion of my essays and writing assignments than does the teacher.
2. When I start to write an essay or writing assignment, I feel as though I know what I am doing.
3. When I get a paper back, I want to work hard to improve.
4. When I don't agree with the grade I receive on an essay or writing assignment, I am upset with the teacher.
5. After I finish an essay or writing assignment, I feel confident.
6. The teacher's comments make me feel that the teacher dislikes me.
7. Even though I don't think the grade is an accurate assessment of my work, I pay attention to the teacher-written comments on essays and writing assignments.
8. In judging my competence as a writer of essays and writing assignments, I believe that I do a good job.
9. The teacher-written comments on my essays and writing assignments help me to improve.
10. I believe that teacher-written comments are important on an essay or writing assignment.
11. The teacher-written comments on an essay or writing assignment are specific enough to help me.
12. I make an effort to remember the comments made on past assignments when I begin to write.

13. I think about the person who grades my essays and writing assignments as being unfair.
14. I am confident when I look for an essay or writing assignment to be returned.
15. When I write an essay or writing assignment, I have a feeling of power and control.
16. When I look at a blank piece of paper and have to do an essay or writing assignment, my mind goes blank.
17. I think the paper grader is purposely trying to hurt me with the comments written on an essay or writing assignment.
18. The teacher-written comments on essays and writing assignments do not help me to improve.
19. When I start to write an essay or writing assignment, I feel afraid.
20. When I start to write essays and writing assignments, I feel confident.
21. When I disagree with the grade on an essay or writing assignment, I feel that the teacher doesn't respect my creativity.
22. The teacher's comments written on an essay or writing assignment make me feel that the teacher is giving me personal instruction.

Groupings

I. Comments that describe the degree of confidence about the writing process
items: 2, 5, 8, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20
II. Comments that describe improvement in the writing process
items: 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 22
III. Comments that show a negative feeling about self or grader
items: 1, 4, 6, 13, 17, 21

An Annotated Bibliography on the Research Paper and Related Studies

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Newsweek and *Time* shout that "Johnny Can't Read." Parents mutter, teachers grumble, and many rally around the "Back to Basics" flag. We see that Johnny and Janie's reading skills (and their arithmetic skills) have declined according to evidence of SAT and ACT scores. School systems are instituting competency exams, while some individuals bluntly request that Johnny or Janie not be sent to college. College instructors are dismayed at the lack of "basic" language skills, and according to some, an even more basic inability to reason.

Over the long term, there is concern about the Johnny and Janie students becoming Johnny and Janie professors, and government

officials, and businessmen, and the whole society eventually disintegrating into mediocrity. Few of Willa Cather's Jim Burdens are entering state universities today. Of those entering, many are consumers, more willing to buy their grades than earn them. Given this climate, how do we teach, or even justify teaching, the research paper?

The following annotated bibliography indicates what has been done in the last ten years. Many of the entries describe methods for teaching library and original research, for motivating interest, and for helping students reach conclusions; a few deal with philosophical issues; and some concern practical issues of fraud or publication. The entries apply to others besides composition instructors and levels other than the university level.

1. Bjaaland, Patricia C. and Arthur Lederman. "The Detection of Plagiarism," *Educational Forum* 37 (1973), 201-206.
   Outlines several clues for detecting plagiarism in students' papers and specific precautions when assigning research papers. Less helpful to the English professor than to colleagues in other areas.
2. Bramer, George R. "Freedom and Control in the Research Paper," *CCC* 20 (1969), 352-359.
   Discusses a method to teach the research paper which should forestall plagiarism and negate the "paste-up job" by a "method of graduated freedom or diminishing control" in which the major sources are read and discussed by all in the class and secondary additional sources are researched individually.
3. Broz, Nancy D. "Writing or Plagiarizing?" Paper presented at the Leadership Conference of the New Jersey Council of Teachers of English, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, May, 1977 (ERIC ED 146 619).
   Asserts that all research writing, no matter the subject, can be taught by this method of teaching short "controlled reports" (one-half to two pages) as done with seventh graders.
4. Coleman, Kathleen and Charles Dintrone, *How to Use the Library* (San Diego State University, Malcolm A. Love Library, 1974).
   Directed to students using the San Diego State Library, this pamphlet covers the basic library research information but also divides research procedures into the familiar and the unfamiliar.
5. Davis, William E., Jr. and George F. Estey, "Research and Writing by Student Groups — Difficult But Rewarding," *CCC* 28 (1977), 204-206.
   Traces the joys and sorrows of a sophomore level interdisciplinary project involving group research and writing at Boston University over a two-year period. Some interesting and helpful insights into controls for group work and group measurement.
6. Deane, Barbara, "Putting the Inferential Process to Work in the Classroom," *CCC* 27 (1976), 50-52.
   Presents several tools (films, advertisements, etc.) and methods to cause students to understand and control their own inference-making, "one of

the skills that is absolutely essential to all reading and thinking" and important to research activity, but applies the process only to interpretation of fiction and characterization.

7. Estrin, Herman A. "Successful Research Paper for College Freshmen," *CCC* 18 (1967), 261-65.
   Suggests ways to motivate young adults to write a successful research paper. Basic to the motivation is encouragement to research subjects of adolescent social and psychological problems which are found with the two annotated bibliographies of adolescent psychology and popular culture which are included.
8. Farmer, Robert A. *1000 Ideas for Term Papers in World Literature* (New York: Arc Publishing, 1970).
   Briefly delineates the research process for papers about literature and lists the 1000 ideas by literary period.
9. Felsenthal, Norman A. "The Undergraduate as Researcher: Selected Studies in Mass Communication," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Speech Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota, April, 1973 (ERIC ED 075 878).
   Explains how "Broadcasting and Society" courses encourage a small percentage of students to do original research (non-library).
10. Keith, Pauline A. and Paul J. Karish, "How to Teach Library Research Skills in Secondary School Social Studies," How To Do It Series, Number 23, National Council for the Social Studies, Washington, D.C., 1968.
    Emphasizes the basic purpose of research procedures in a ten-step process (from topic selection to footnotes) of a social studies paper and outlines a fifteen day reference skills teaching sequence which presents a rapid pace and sketchy treatment of difficult concepts.
11. Keroack, Ann, "A Basic Behavioral Objectives Library Package," March, 1977 (ERIC ED 136 819).
    Describes a package designed for vo-tech freshmen in the use of the library which deals in eight objectives with only the card catalogue and finding books on the shelves. Includes a good brief explanation of the Library of Congress system.
12. Larmouth, Donald Wilford, "The Life Around Us: Design for a Community Research Component in English Composition Courses," *CCC* 23 (1972), 383-89.
    Offers a process for community research which contains highly specific structured assignments as organization models which become part of the finished final paper and which includes accurate documentation of oral and written sources and critical analysis of sources. Also applicable to group research.
13. Liston, Barbara, " 'Researching' with Third and Fourth Graders," *Maryland English Journal*, 8 (1970), 26-28.
    Provides a process for researching a word which combines library and reference search with "original" research in an interview with an adult and results in a report much like a Science Fair project report.
14. Loveless, Edna Maye, *Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Students in Eighth Grade English Classes*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1969 (ERIC ED 046 764).
    Recapitulates a study of instruction in the use of qualifying words to avoid overgeneralization which had inconclusive results.

15. Lynch, Robert E. "The Art of Fact and the Art of Fiction," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, St. Louis, Missouri, March, 1975 (ERIC ED 105 517).

    Argues that since there is little distinction between fact and opinion, there should be none in style either and writing techniques apply to *all* writing.

16. Malloch, A. E. "A Dialogue on Plagiarism," *College English*, 38 (1976), 165-74.

    Traces a conversation about plagiarism: its nature, definition, the personal reaction usually felt by the professor, the issue of punishment, the system of evaluation, and the nature of discourse. An interesting official university withdrawal policy recommends itself from the dialogue. Good for digging around in our assumptions.

17. Manning, Brad A. and Donna M. Buntain, "A Module for Training Library Researchers," the Texas University at Austin Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, 1976 (ERIC ED 145 846).

    A self-paced package for those in educational psychology to learn to conduct literature surveys which is easily adaptable to other disciplines. Particularly good sections are those on writing an outline and locating references even though it is localized to that library. The reference to notecards, however, are the traditional bibliography cards.

18. McCoy, Dorothy, "Electrified Term Papers," *English Journal* 60 (1971), 107-10.

    Reports on student "compositions" which were individual or team authored slide presentations accompanied by music rather than the traditional typed pages with notes and bibliography, although an outline accompanied the projects. A creative use of media which used thematic concerns rather than information research in community or library.

19. Millard, Joanne, *Using the Library to Write a Term Paper*, (California University at L.A.: College Library Reference Section, 1973).

    A standard library research manual focused on a particular library.

20. Mochocovita, Philip B. "Hey Students, Get Your Term Papers Here!" *College Management* 7 (1972), 26-27.

    Examines the term paper sales market, campus reactions, attempts of some eastern schools to use the courts, and the view of the educational process which the proliferation of such companies exposes.

21. Murphy, Joseph A. "How to do Library Research on a Foreign Culture," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Washington, D.C., November, 1975 (ERIC ED 117 989).

    Organizes the step by step instruction in a specialized area of research but includes sections on inquiry technique and techniques of literature search with an annotated list of references.

22. Orth, Michael P. "An Advanced Composition Course Aimed at Publication," *CCC* 27 (1976), 210-12.

    Focuses composition course so that professor and class write and scrutinize papers designed to be mailed to publishers. Asks that "they be honest articles, full of digested facts presented to make some point."

23. Patterson, Margaret C. "Ivory Towers and Note Cards," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Modern Language Association, 1976 (ERIC ED 137 801).

Pleads for more cooperation between professors and librarians to teach research skills to students and describes successful methods of professors who effectively communicated research needs and requirements. Applies more to specialized subject classes than to composition.

24. Pettigre, B. Joye, "Motivating Students to Write: Community Study," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on English Education, Knoxville, Tennessee, March, 1977 (ERIC ED 145 418).

Sets forth a plan for high school composition with a heavy emphasis on personal exploration and creative writing of poems and character sketches of families, but which also includes some compositions based on interviews of senior citizens in the local community.

25. Ralph, Ruth. "Six Week Scheme for the Research Paper," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Denver, Colorado, March 31, 1978 (ERIC ED 165 792).

Advises getting students in Basic English courses interested in a subject before researching it by browsing through recent magazines in class and generating questions about interesting subjects before following a six week sequence to the final paper which includes interview research and library research.

26. Rayne, Ann, "Precis Writing: An Approach to Basic Composition," *CCC* 27 (1976), 403-406.

Proposes a method of teaching precis writing which applies to other levels besides basic writing as it "forces students to read carefully, to analyze their reading so that they can make choices as to what constitutes the main ideas of the writing and ultimately translate those ideas into their own words."

27. *Report Writing Workshop. Student Manual* (Washington, D.C., Community and Office Skills Training Center, 1974).

Includes discussion of research, gathering facts, and evaluating data.

28. Samuels, Marilyn Schauer, "A Mini-Course in the Research Paper," *College English* 38 (1976), 189-93.

Presents an intersession mini-course in the research paper which gives a helpful sequential procedure for teaching research units combining group lessons, group "therapy," individual graded assignments, group workshops, and individual conferences. Applicable to any level college course.

29. Satloff, Marilyn R. "Best Sellers as a Research Tool: High Interest, Low Readability Level," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March, 1976 (ERIC ED 123 575).

Lists the advantages of having students read high interest level low readability level books to generate fuller research and to improve their writing. Based on sound research of readability levels.

30. Seale, Jan, "Mexican-American Folklore: An Approach to the Research Paper," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the South Central Modern Language Association, Dallas, Texas, October, 1976 (ERIC ED 135 012).

Describes and illustrates a step by step, fairly tightly controlled research paper assignment which focuses on Mexican-American folklore and which combines interviews with library research for papers which are developed by one of three methods.

31. Sherman, Dean, "Professional Writing: A New Approach to the Teaching of College Composition," *CCC* 23 (1972), 302-303.
Reviews six steps which produce a writing assignment for a national magazine involving choice of magazine, researching of the magazine for comprehension of reading audience, choosing a topic, researching the topic, and writing the essay (in traditional term paper style in the rough draft).

32. Sim, Yong Sup, "A Self-Guided Library Tour Method at Mercer County Community College. The Learning Theory and Applications Module," Trenton, New Jersey, August, 1976, Practicum presented to Nova University in partial fulfillment of the degree of Ed.D. (ERIC ED 135 342).
Substantiates reliability and effectiveness of cassette self-guided library tours over other types of library instruction and explains history and research behind the method.

33. Soll, Lila, "Writing an Original Research Paper Involves an Ability to Perform," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association, Miami, Florida, October, 1976 (ERIC ED 140 331).
Relates students' experiences in the nonacademic world to academic assignments for the first important steps of a research assignment up through the working hypothesis and continues with a series of assignments more traditional in nature.

34. Stewart, Barbara C. "An Evaluation of a Course in Library Instruction at Ball State University," September, 1976 (ERIC ED 138 246).
Confirms the hypothesis that a course in library instruction increases learning of the use of library tools more effectively than use of the library without such instruction by explanation of a careful research study, and presents an excellent bibliography of other studies involving library skills.

35. Stillerman, Sophia J. "Format for Library Instruction; Stated Student Preferences at a Community College," Paper presented for ED319 at Seton Hall University, June, 1975 (ERIC ED 115 294).
Surveys students at a community college finding that a majority used the library, and that of the majority of users who had had library orientation in English classes many lacked research skills. Recommends innovative course in library skills.

36. Stoffle, Carla J. and Gabriella S. Bonn, "An Inventory of Library Orientation and Instruction Methods," *RQ* 13 (1973), 129-33.
Summarizes well the assorted methods of orientation and instruction in library skills.

37. "Term Paper Companies and the Constitution," *Duke Law Journal*, 1973, No. 6, pp. 1275-1317.
Analyzes the legal intricacies of the sale of term papers and the problems associated with a legal solution. Concludes that "it is not only unlawful but unnecessary to curtail first amendment freedoms in order to control a problem capable of being resolved by colleges and universities themselves."

38. Trexler, Joan and Laura Kent, *Commercial Theme-Writing Services*, American Council on Education, Higher Education Panel, Washington, D.C. (ERIC ED 071 003).
Collates results of questionnaire to 441 institutions about firms, advertisements, penalties imposed, and further actions.

39. Tway, Eileen, "Implications of Research Studies in the Teaching of Writing," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, February, 1973 (ERIC ED 077 003).

Differentiates between research studies in teaching behaviors, which need criteria, and studies in teaching approaches, which are easier to conduct.

40. Underwood, Jean Louise, "Factors Affecting Differences in Quality and Style of Writing in College Freshman Examinations," Ed. D. Dissertation, University of Oregon, 1969 (ERIC ED 046 919).

Observes little connection between the quality of writing and the use of any of the best selling composition textbooks or any other visual aids and materials in either regular composition courses or technical report writing courses.

41. "Viewpoints: The Unit Research Study and Its Operation," Georgia State Department of Education, Atlanta, Georgia, Department of Educational Services, 1976 (ERIC ED 147 301).

Urges an elementary education theory of unit research study designed to help students individualize and direct their own efforts and discover what is to be learned and where to find answers alone and in groups as well as to help them learn to draw proper conclusions.

42. Vuturo, Robert A. and Charles E. Cowdrick, "Recycling the College Library," *CCC* 28 (1977), 57-58.

Reviews two approaches to teaching "the art of information-access" and urges the use of the extras, the discards of catalogue cards and indexes, in the classroom.

43. Wagner, Eileen N. "Outfoxing Fraud: Research Papers without Repression," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Kansas City, Missouri, March, 1977 (ERIC ED 143 015).

Explains a four part strategy to discourage term paper fraud and allow enough freedom and research skills learning: generation of topic lists, oversight of process, prescription of an argumentative essay formula, and requisite of primary evidence found by one student.

44. Work, James C. "Assignment: Library: The Use of Non-Research Library Topics in Composition Courses," 1975 (ERIC ED 109 684).

Views the library as potential subject matter for compositions with other writing goals other than research. Four types of papers are description of reference books, comparison of indexes, evaluation of facilities, persuasion about some aspect of the library.

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Planning a Writing Environment in Elementary School

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The *Back to Basics Movement* in the United States has caused many teachers to be placed under considerable pressure to spend a major portion of each school day teaching isolated language tasks which have little or no relationship to the personal-language-learning style of individual children. Many children work diligently on assigned phonic drills, spelling lists, word recognition lessons and syntactic exercises and in the process wonder what relationship these tasks have with learning to comprehend the printed page or to write their thoughts in sentences, stories, reports or essays. Teachers become discouraged when they have spent time and effort teaching language skills and children's responses show little gain in reading comprehension, writing composition or standardized tests scores.

The temptation is to give children more and more isolated drill because this seems demanded by the public and, in some instances, administrators. Teachers face a dilemma because they have realized for a long time that learners must be given freedom to process information in ways which are consistent with individual language styles. They know that it takes years for skills to be *owned* and *used* effectively by learners. They know that skills must be taught in contexts which are meaningful to learners and that, in many instances, isolating the skills in discrete segments does not allow the learned to make the necessary transitions from the receptive to the expressive language arts.

Instead of isolating and drilling upon specific language skills, this writer suggests the focus for instructional practice should relate to the question, "How does a person process language in order to *own* and *use* the skills in effective receptive and expressive communication?" Since children are able to process necessary linguistic structures and successfully communicate to others their needs, desires, and interests before coming to school, it seems feasible to establish a classroom environment which contains procedures for children to use their own language-learning styles.

It is my belief that children fail to gain linguistic competencies within the classroom because they have not been allowed to utilize

their personal language strategies. Perhaps the main reason for the failure of teachers to permit children to use their own ways of approaching language tasks is that the lessons have been too structured, too logical in form when learning processes are psychological.

For example, children often misspell words in a sentence, paragraph or composition even though they have successfully drilled on the words and passed them on a spelling test. It seems difficult for children to make the transition from the *spelling lesson* to the creative act of composing their thoughts in written form.

This writer suggests that teachers recognize that the contextual setting of the spelling list in a structured spelling lesson is quite different from the contextual setting required in writing a sentence, paragraph, or composition. The skills required in the two tasks are quite different; for too long the teaching of isolated language tasks has been considered cumulative. Even though it is logical to assume that word and syntactic structures learned in isolation can be effectively used in context requiring creative thought, the assumption is not psychologically sound. The result can be poor, ineffective methods of teaching composition.

If careful analysis is given to the task of writing, it is soon evident that it is a creative act. It is closely related to the task of the artist who is composing a painting, or creating a sculpture, a dance, or a drama. Writing, like all artistic expressions, involves a balance of form and content.

Writing can take many forms. For example, letters, diaries, records, stories, and plays all come into being as a result of human thought and are produced within an environmental context which either facilitates or inhibits the process. We can learn much about teaching children the process of writing by studying the lives and works of artists as they struggle with the problems of production. Most artists would object strongly to teaching methods which required them to produce rows and rows of straight lines, circles, and shapes before they were allowed to produce any kind of artistic statement. In many ways, this would be just as logical as the requirements of teachers who feel that children must make pages and pages of the alphabet before being allowed to produce any type of grammatical statement. It is true that all artistic forms, including writing, require line and space in proportion as well as content; however, effective teaching methods require teachers who base their procedures on sound, psychological principles.

Because writing is an artistic form, it is necessary to be aware of the psychological climate in which it is produced. Writing is

an expressive act based on the individual's personal linguistic style. As such, it is important for teachers to be aware of the factors which inhibit expression. Donoghue (1975) suggests four inhibitors: (1) tests based upon detailed memorization, (2) stereotyped sex-roles, (3) discouragement of fantasy and imagination, and (4) social expectation, including peer censure. If teachers are willing to consider these factors and operate on the assumption that writing should be taught in terms of the child's personal linguistic style, it should not be too difficult to design programs which enable children to master the art of written composition.

Talking before Writing

In planning a writing environment, children should be permitted to express their thoughts orally before they are asked to compose thoughts on paper. Teachers who are willing to plan many activities which allow children to engage in conversations and discussions are helping children learn to write. If children *hear their own language,* they are in a better position to know whether they are communicating intended meaning. The reactions of others provide clues; if it is necessary to restate an idea, the meaning is not clear.

Young children may attempt the writing process with scribbles; however, long before they come to school most children have begun to recognize that much more than scribbles are needed if others are to read their writing. When this stage of development has been reached, the child is ready to have others write their thoughts in proper form. Many children by age four recognize that when someone writes they are putting symbols into a regular, structured form.

Writing, a Graphic Form

Many teachers have been quite successful in helping children discover and produce proper graphic forms in writing by allowing them to watch the teacher write as they, the students, give dictation. When children have the opportunity to see their words in print, they begin the process of generalizing the rules for letter formation, spelling, and sentence structure. They begin to see the necessity for making utterances in syntactic units with the use of punctuation.

This approach is psychologically sound because it permits children to use their own language style and enables them to generate the necessary rules for writing. If the teacher immediately reads orally to the child what has been dictated, she is providing an opportunity for re-thinking and revising syntactic structures which

are not clear. Children often correct their meanings and improve vocabulary during this process.

Since youngsters are active participators in the learning process, they soon will begin to request to do the actual writing themselves. Teachers must be aware that, in the initial stages, children do not know what they want to say nor do they know where they are going in thought. Many teachers have seen the words "THE END" on a child's paper and recognize that these words actually mean, "I'm tired" or "I quit."

During the primary years of school, children should ***have their say*** without formal evaluation. Informal guidance and help should be provided in ways which make it possible for children to explore and discover the complexities of writing. They should not be placed under pressure to produce sterile forms of writing by being required to copy dull, meaningless words, sentences, or paragraphs which have no relationship to their personal language.

Writing Content

Many children choose to write stories as their first attempt at composition. This preference is natural because they have had parents and teachers read stories to them. From these experiences, they have been able to gain a sense of story parts, and they have generalized some of the basic rules for story production. Also, the composition of stories allows children to use their imaginations, much as they have done in play. In using their imagination in a free-flowing way they are able to write in story form without having to understand all the complexities of the writing process.

As children write their stories, teachers should read them orally and discuss such elements as plot, characterization, sequence, and theme. Also, individual conferences should be held for the purpose of providing suggestions and encouragement. Story writing provides an excellent opportunity for children to learn to accept suggestions and to rewrite or revise.

Letter writing is another activity enjoyed by children; however, if the process is one in which children learn the reasons for various forms of letters, arrangements should be made to give or mail the letter to the person for which it was intended. Writing announcements and reports can be worthwhile and valid if there is a legitimate reason.

Writing just for the sake of writing has little meaning for elementary children. When their writing is to be read by others, they will put forth a great deal of effort. As many elementary teachers know, elementary youngsters can produce beautiful statements in prose and poetry if the psychological climate is supportive and

the children's writing is used in honest efforts to communicate with others.

Examining the Writing of Others

When children have reached the maturity to produce written compositions in the form of stories, letters, announcements, and reports, it is time to help them examine the writing of others. Children can be encouraged to examine the way recognized authors sequence stories, develop paragraphs, use punctuation, and work toward individual style. After children have had many experiences writing in forms which have immediate, practical use, they seem more interested in discussing such questions as, "How did the author develop his characters?" "How was meaning made clear in the story, paragraph, or essay?" or "What words give the reader the theme, purpose, mood, or main idea in the selection?"

This developmental phase in the process of learning to write requires that children have reading competencies which permit comprehension of abstract literary terminology. Individual differences among learners must be considered; however, many children will be able to read well enough to analyze an author's writings and relate it to their own attempts to compose thoughts.

It is during this period that serious consideration can be given to such terms as theme, simile, metaphor, personification and onomatopeia. Also, it is during this period, that children begin to gain depth understanding of poetic form. One would hope that teachers have read poetry to children throughout their school careers as well as helped them read poetry because this is necessary before children can generalize the rules which underlie poetic forms. In teaching the child to write poetry, I believe that there must be many opportunities to generalize rules which come from his/her personal-language-learning style.

Without any doubt, children's attempts to comprehend abstract concepts and use them in their own writing will require sensitive teachers who support and encourage immature effort. Teachers must be aware of the need to edit children's writing in ways which do not destroy self-concept or freedom to continue the process of exploring and discovering ways of using individual language styles.

In summary, writing should be considered a creative act rather than a series of isolated skills. Since most children have the necessary skills for effective communication before coming to school, teachers should provide experiences which enable them to continue the process of language development in ways which are consistent with their own personal-language learning processes. In following this proposition effective writing instruction should:

1. Provide learners many opportunities for oral communication because language is first learned in an oral context.

2. Include oral dictation by children which is recorded by teachers because in this way children can begin the process of generalizing rules of written language.

3. Provide encouragement and support of children's writing because writing is a creative act which is influenced by psychological factors.

4. Provide opportunities for individual conferences because in this way children can begin to understand the complexities of composing in written form.

5. Provide opportunities for children to read and analyze the writings of recognized authors because in this way they will have a means of generalizing abstract literary qualities and understanding those factors which are necessary in producing works of lasting quality.

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"Structuring Writing Experiences in Junior High School"

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The English Department at Lincoln Junior High School has developed a two-year writing program that gets results. After students have undergone intensive training on the fundamentals of functional grammar and paragraph development, they are given a variety of structured writing experiences — beginning with the paragraph. I have selected some of the most successful assignments to describe here in the hope that the ideas might prove useful to other teachers anxious to give their students writing know-how.

I have my students begin their writing program by practicing each of the four basic types of paragraphs: (1) narration, (2) description, (3) argumentation, and (4) exposition. To get them started, I give very specific directions for each assignment. As you can see by the following two sample worksheets, their early writing of paragraphs is kept tightly controlled. Each composition must be developed in conformity to a given pattern. Notice that the worksheet gives the student an introduction to the topic, a quasi-outline, a fill-in form for actual sentences, and directions for the completion of the final draft on notebook paper.

Grammar plays an important part in the two-year program. Each grammatical concept is taught with the express purpose of readying the students for the compositions which follow. For instance, the grammar of the sentence can be taught while discussing the importance of the topic sentence in a composition. Paragraph practice can be followed by assigning a three-paragraph theme with clearly designated form. I often ask my students to begin a theme with a paragraph asking a question, to start the next paragraph with "there," and to begin the final paragraph with a sentence having the S LV PN pattern. I have also asked for three-paragraph themes, each one beginning with a different grammatical construction, such as an adverb clause, an infinitive phrase, and an adjective clause.

When the paragraphing unit has been completed, students spend the balance of the seventh grade year and the following year by following the same basic sequence: grammar study and a follow-up writing experience of one or two compositions. As the students become more adept at writing, they are asked to include better

STRUCTURED COMPOSITION #1 (Narration)

A HAPPY TIME

This will be your first experience in writing a paragraph through a structured plan. You will discover that writing in this manner is much easier than doing the whole paper on your own. That is one of the major purposes of this program, to make writing an exciting adventure for you. Let's see if you don't end up with a paper you're proud of.

Think back, maybe you'll have to go back quite a few years, about the times you have really pleased your parents, the times when they swelled with pride over something that you accomplished or performed. Write that episode on the line below:

_____
(The time I made my parents the happiest)

Now, let's tell the circumstances of the episode:

1. Where it happened: _____ 4. Why it was done: _____
2. When it happened: _____ 5. How it was done: _____
3. Who was involved: _____ 6. What your reward was: _____

Answering those questions above gave you the facts or details which you need for your first composition, which will be a piece of narrative writing. Remember: Narrative writing tells a story, true or false.

COMPOSITION

Complete each sentence as called for below:

Sentence #1: I'll never forget the time I gave my Mom and Dad their happiest moments. (Topic Sentence)

Sentence #2: It happened _____
_____(Tell where, when it happened)

Sentence #3: I _____
_____
(Tell what you did that made them proud)

Sentence #4: This was possible because I _____
_____(Tell how you were able to do this)

Sentence #5: Mom and Dad, as a result, _____
_____
(Tell what they did when you accomplished or performed your deed, and how you were rewarded)

Now, check over your sentences. See where you can improve your vocabulary, or rearrange your sentences so they sound smooth and interesting.

Rewrite your paper on notebook paper. Place your parents' picture on the front page if you have a snapshot, or find a picture of some adults.

transitions, greater sentence variety, and more effective opening and concluding paragraphs. They are also given specific proofreading questions to serve as a guide.

Always in the program, the composition unit is comprised of the following: (1) introduction and discussion of the chosen topic, (2) development of the outline, (3) research for the outline, (4) com-

STRUCTURED COMPOSITION #2 (Description)

AN ITEM IN THE CLASSROOM

For your second composition, we will write a description. This is going to be easy, too, because you will work with a plan, and from that plan you'll have an interesting and organized paper.

Choose some item in this classroom. It can be any item in the room, stationary or movable. Be sure there is enough detail about it for a paper:

_____
(Item to be described)

Now for your next step, which is to make a study of it. Bring the item to your desk if you can; otherwise, go to it and make a close survey of it. Answer the following questions:

1. What is it?
2. What is its shape?
3. What are its dimensions?
4. What are its colors?
5. What designs does it have?
6. For what is it used?

You've answered the above questions so you will have details for your paper. Complete the composition outline below using the materials above; let's not tell the reader what it is until we come to the last line. That builds suspense!

COMPOSITION

Sentence #1: Here in room ____ I am looking at something that is _____
_____.
(Tell its shape and dimensions)

Sentence #2: _____are the colors that describe it.

Sentence #3: Its designs include _____
_____.

Sentence #4: Some interesting features of this object are its _____
_____.

Sentence #5: As _____
_____this is most often used.

Sentence #6: It's time to tell you what it is if you haven't already guessed; it is
_____

Check over your sentences carefully. Improve them whenever you can. Use the best word choices possible. (Consult that book called the Thesaurus for synonyms.)

Now, rewrite your composition on notebook paper. For illustration, try to draw the object in its outline only.

pletion of the first draft, (5) proofreading, (6) completion of succeeding drafts, (7) final proofreading, and (8) evaluation.

In evaluating their writing, I have found that students are more encouraged if their errors in mechanics are pencilled in and if they receive a short written comment rather than a letter grade. I

think it is appropriate under certain circumstances to give two grades — one for content and the other for mechanics. However, I cannot overstress the importance of a written comment, for it displays the teacher's personal interest in a much more meaningful way than any grade.

What happens to each set of papers after they have been returned, corrected and evaluated for the final time? I exhibit them on the bulletin board — not just the best papers — everybody's! The reason for this is twofold: first of all, students need to write for someone other than their teacher. Secondly, they benefit when they see the degree of their competition. When the papers are removed from the bulletin board, they are placed in individual writing folders so that students can keep a record of their writing. As the year continues, they derive much satisfaction in seeing tangible evidence of their progress with each succeeding paper.

The kind of structured writing that I assign is most effective when the students enjoy the topics and welcome the challenge presented in the directions. Following are twenty assignments which have worked with students at Lincoln Junior High:

1. Consider first the TTDDCC formula created by Lavonne Poquet and Goldie Kissel of Hinsdale, Illinois. Its code is merely *T*itle, *T*opic Sentence, *D*efinition, *D*escription, *C*omparison, and *C*onclusion. Expository topics lend themselves exceedingly well to this plan, for it relieves students of worry about organization. Later in eighth grade, the sections other than the title can be expanded into separate paragraphs. Such items as a leaf, a season, a spice, an abstract topic, or a type of occupation are worth attention.

2. The dot and line paper is fun. Ask students to place nine dots in a haphazard order on a 3 x 5 card. Then have them connect those dots, and try to conjure up some image in those lines, be it literal or figurative. A three-paragraph paper would follow, paragraph one being the introduction, paragraph two the description, and the third explaining the value of the figure.

3. Pass to each student a picture of some delectable food. Then assign each of them a telephone conversation with a friend wherein they endeavor to describe the food so realistically, their friend will want to partake of it.

4. Have the students imagine they have visited one of the other eight planets, and in an expository paper tell statistics of their trip, what they saw on the planet, problems existing there, its relationship to other planets, and the original discovery of the planet.

5. A great favorite has been a detailed explanation about the eating of a candy bar. Ask students to bring their favorite bar to

class, then by steps have them record the size and weight from the wrapper, the ingredients, the design, the aroma, and, upon removal from the covering, the bar itself. As they consume the bar right there in class, bite by bite, have them list their reactions. For instance, what is the effect on the tongue, the teeth, and the throat? Then what happens after they finish eating? With these details, they then can write in chronological order precisely the experience they had with the candy. Chewing gum can be used in the same way.

6. Two interesting papers of a different vein are involved with cartoons. One develops a short story from a three or four picture cartoon strip, e.g., *Peanuts* or *The Ryatts*. In the opening paragraph the scene, time, and characters are depicted, and in the ensuing paragraphs is the development of the plot along with the dialogue. The paper ends with the punch line. The other paper deals with a single cartoon and its analysis. Here the student describes the overall picture, why it is comical, what is its appeal, and then reveals what all cartoons share in common, a serious underlying theme.

7. Another expository paper dealing with the results of a classroom survey is intriguing. Items to be surveyed are endless: hours spent on a telephone in one week; money earned in the past month; favorite singers, food, and records; most hated food or TV show, or violence in film. When the students have compiled their data, they prepare a four-paragraph report which involves a brief introduction, statistics on persons surveyed, specific findings, and general conclusions. To illustrate their paper, they can draw a graph.

8. After the students have read a mystery story, ask them to assume the role of a reporter and write an exposé on the crime in the tale. This theme would include background, the description of persons involved, attempts at solution, and finally the results.

9. Students enjoy pretending they are their own pet as they relate the animal's interpretation of home and daily life. Besides that, they can tell (from the point of view of the animal) about their favorite foods, enemies, pleasant and unpleasant activities, maybe a bit of their history, and their most unforgettable experience.

10. Looking at familiar objects in detail is the major reason for assigning students a visit to a specific part of the school building. Let them spend fifteen minutes at the spot, and later prepare a one-paragraph observation on what they saw.

To create a mood, students can describe a setting and a character. Let them use five paragraphs: the first to set the scene, the second to describe the character, the third to explain his movements, the

fourth to reveal his departure, and the fifth to describe the scene now that he is gone.

11. Writing a profile of a fellow classmate is not only absorbing, it affords the students an insight into the lives of others. First they interview one of their classmates to learn age, address, hobbies, honors, church affiliations, school interests, favorites, attitudes, special skills, and the like. Secondly, they employ this information in a character sketch that calls attention to the classmate's most unique qualities.

12. A valuable exercise in argumentation deals with the study of advertisements and their individual claims. Give the students an advertisement, preferably one that is easily refutable, and have them debunk it in a paper that would include an explanation of advertising, its purposes, then the advertisement in question and its deficiencies, and, last of all, a method to read advertisements cautiously.

13. A different type of narrative is involved in this special dialogue exercise. Ask the students to imagine they are concealed in some part of the school, and though they hear groups of people go by, they cannot see them. Their task is to create conversations that reveal just what type of persons passed by, at the same time not describing the persons nor using any credit tags.

14. The use of the five senses can add spark to a short anecdote. Develop a series of lists, perhaps on a 3 x 5 card for each group, and ask the students to choose one. The list might be SIGHT OF A DOG, SOUND OF A SAW, TASTE OF A PICKLE, SMELL OF A BEACH, or TOUCH OF STEEL WOOL. Utilizing all five senses in an appropriate manner, the students write an anecdote on some imaginary experience.

15. Ask the students to name three things that should be saved if the world were to end. Then ask them to discuss each one in a structured five-paragraph paper with the following organization: Introduction, Item #1, Item #2, Item #3, and Conclusion.

16. Have each student select some spring flower to study, and then trace its history, tell its growth process, give scientific data about it and, last of all, describe its appearance.

17. Assign a comparison. They could write on the Cubs and the Sox, a Cadillac and a Volkswagen, a play and an opera, Sparta and Athens, Twain and Poe, milk and soft drinks, A students and F students, and the like. Ask them to list first what the two items have in common, then what makes them different.

18. Have them argue that Philip Nolan in Edward Everett Hale's story, "The Man Without a Country" was either fairly or unfairly punished. Students could give three specific reasons with

two or three sentences after each reason to prove their points.

19. Have students write an ending to Frank Stockton's "The Lady or the Tiger."

20. Assign the students an animal to study as the subject for a culminatng activity in writing. Have them utilize expository and descriptive techniques with explanation of the animal's appearance, foods, habitat, and habits. They could use narrative forms to explain, perhaps, how the animal was photographed in a recent picture. Finally, ask them to show how human beings often use names of animals to describe bad behavior.

These ideas are only a few of the countless topics that can be developed in a two-year writing program. The alert teacher is ever on the watch for new and better topics to afford young people challenging writing experiences. And students must write! Nobody ever became a better writer by not writing.

How We Teach Writing: A Report from a Four-Year High School

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The hue and cry of going back to the basics leaves one with the question uppermost in the minds of English teachers — what are the basics? If this means the old "taxonomy" game of segregating words and phrases, underscoring predicates, and circling subordinating conjunctions, then the authors of this article feel we are wasting students' time. Going back to the basics really means fully utilizing the control over the English language that the student brings into class with him. Since he already knows how to speak and listen, this can be done best through the discipline of teaching the student how to write.

By the time the student walks into your classroom, he already has locked in his brain all the necessary syntax and a working vocabulary needed to communicate. Witness the fact that he spontaneously speaks in sentences and understands them when they are spoken to him. His control over his native language manifests itself in a synthetic process, yet in the English classroom he is challenged to learn language by tearing apart sentences that are written by someone else.

To teach writing properly, we feel that we must try to convert this natural process of language into the learned skills of writing. Speech is fleeting and temporally oriented. A spoken word cannot be recovered other than by some electronic device. The written word, however, has a certain permanence to it and is spatially oriented. It is an artifact created by taking the natural process one step beyond speech and placing thoughts on paper. This very permanence lends itself to a disciplined approach to teaching language.

Based on this philosophy, we have developed an English curriculum for a four year high school.

The first semester of freshman year is the foundation of the writing program because the student works on sentence writing skills and basic organizational patterns that are reinforced throughout the high school English program.

The first assumption made is that students cannot write a sentence yet know intuitively what sentences are. They might not be able to define a sentence but have been speaking them, sometimes awkwardly, since they were children. At this point students are introduced to the concept of manipulatory skills which include combination, rearrangement, subtraction, and expansion. The mastery of these skills leaves students with an unlimited number of options for packaging their ideas. The approach to teaching these skills is functional since students are given all the content but must perform the manipulatory exercises.

With the first three skills the content is supplied in a series of short sentences. The student combines, rearranges, and subtracts unnecessary words.

EXAMPLE: There is a boy. The boy is small. There is a pond. The boy fell. The boy swam. The boy was safe.

SAMPLE SENTENCES:

1. A small boy fell into the pond and swam to safety.
2. The small boy swam to safety despite a fall into the pond.
3. The small boy fell into the pond, but he swam to safety.
4. Into the pond the small boy fell and swam to safety.
5. After falling into the pond, the small boy swam to safety.
6. The small boy falling into the pond swam to safety.
7. Swimming to safety was the small boy who had fallen into the pond.
8. The small boy who fell into the pond swam to safety.
9. Falling into the pond and swimming to safety was the small boy.

10. The small boy who swam to safety had fallen into the pond.
11. To safety swam the small boy who had fallen into the pond.

In using the manipulatory skills, the students spontaneously supply prepositions, conjunctions, relative pronouns, present participles and gerunds. They see that there are many options in expressing their ideas which might lead to a discussion of the placement of key ideas to stress specific thoughts. They learn to economize by subtracting unnecessary and repeated words and phrases. In a word, they learn how to manipulate with words. Students spend approximately two weeks working on these types of drills.

With the skill of expansion, students supply their own content for the first time. A simple idea is suggested, and students expand with the journalistic questions "who," "what," "when," "where," "why," and "how." The three basic skills of combination, rearrangement, and subtraction are reinforced in this process by students writing sentences with their expanded ideas. Finally, all four skills are sharpened by the students' taking a large number of related simple sentences and combining them into one paragraph.

At this point the program moves from the content's being controlled and "stacked" by the teacher to a student-controlled content. Before introducing the eight basic organizational patterns, we spend three to five days working on the concept of controlling idea (thesis statement). First, we discuss what is meant by controlling idea and show the students that they must include key words to limit their paper's development. They are then given a series of controlling ideas, and the class argues over the key words in the sentences given. Finally, the students are given a series of general words and must narrow down their ideas to a specific subject, including key words, to write a provable controlling idea.

EXAMPLE:

General word ..... shopping
Specific place ..... department store
Specific type of shopping ..... back to school
Specific group ..... girls
Key word ..... panic

SAMPLE CONTROLLING IDEA: Panic reigns in the department store as girls shop for their back-to-school wardrobe.

Just as we assumed that students could not write a sentence, we also assumed that they cannot organize a composition. Consequently, we selected eight basic organizational patterns that they will use in their English classes and other academic disciplines. Moving from the simple to the complex, the eight basic organiza-

tional patterns are a solving-a-problem paper, a chronological development paper, a spatial development paper, an incident paper, a mood paper, an order-of-importance paper, a comparison-contrast paper, and eventually a five paragraph composition.

Each composition outline includes a topic for developing a controlling idea, a method of organization, a list of glue words (transitional expressions) for linking together ideas, a series of helpful drills to reinforce the manipulatory skills, a sample good and bad composition, a series of first draft sentence errors, and techniques for ending the paper.

We follow the same basic procedure for all compositions. First, we introduce the composition outline and discuss the controlling idea, method of organization, gluing together ideas (coherence), and method of ending the paper.

Next we work on a series of helpful drills. These drills help build a specific vocabulary for the type of paper being written, reinforce the manipulatory skills, and attack a specific grammatical problem in each paper. For example, in the chronological development paper the drills deal with eliminating ING word fragments whereas the spatial development paper deals with dangling modifiers.

The students then write their first draft and fill out a sentence-opening sheet. This special sheet serves as a concrete check for variety in sentence openings, the special grammatical error taught with each organizational pattern, variety in sentence lengths, the use of concrete verbs, inconsistency of verb tenses, repetition of "empty" words, and run-ons.

Using an overhead projector, we then take the students through a good and bad composition and analyze the factors that make them either good or bad.

In order to teach grammar in conjunction with composition, we have included special first draft sentences errors, written by students in the past, and corrected by each student before writing a final draft. The composition outline has been so "stacked" that there are predictable errors for each composition, for example, the ING word fragment in the chronological development paper.

Finally, the problem of reader consciousness is met head on. At the end of each outlined composition, a checklist is given. The student is asked to read a fellow student's paper and to judge whether or not that writer "stacked the deck" with the items in the composition outline. For many this may be the most useful exercise of all. Because they know exactly what they want to say, writers often make large assumptions and short-circuit the reader. Only when students are forced to read critically the papers of

others do they become aware of how often they leave the reader in the dark. After doing all this, students write their final drafts.

All the steps in this procedure are totally functional. Sentence writing skills, organizational patterns, and grammatical errors are never taught in a vacuum.

During the remainder of their high school career, students reinforce and reuse all of the skills and organizational patterns in response to writing assignments given to them. In the second semester of the freshman year, they will write papers dealing with the short story and novel and organize their papers with one of the organizational patterns that has been taught. As sophomores the students will learn the specific techniques that apply to descriptive and narrative writing. The range of subjects vary from a description of a school corridor or lunchroom to the feelings of a five-year-old child. In the junior year the minimum five-paragraph paper is established as the standard, and students will write in response to their study of American literature. They might analyze the concept of sin in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* or compare the rebellious natures of Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield. As seniors many English electives are open to them. Consequently, the writing assignments vary. However, no matter what type of writing the students are doing, it is always a synthetic process, and the same basic techniques apply. The deck is always stacked.

WANTED: FOR LATE SPRING ISSUE

Student writing from *all* levels

SEND BEST STUDENT WRITING TO:

Poetry Manuscripts:
Professor Janice Neuleib
Department of English
Illinois State University
Normal, Illinois 61761

Expository and Fiction Manuscripts:
Professor Roy Weshinskey
Department of English
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Illinois 62901

FORMAT:

Typed copy is preferred.
8½ x 11 paper is mandatory.
Copy *must* be *clear, legible* and *carefully proofread.* Student work will be printed "as is."

At the end of *each* selection include: (on three separate lines and in order)

STUDENT NAME, GRADE (at time piece was composed)
SCHOOL, SCHOOL'S LOCATION
TEACHER'S NAME

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF ENTRIES:

Each teacher is limited to no more than *five* pieces of prose and *ten* poems.

REQUIRED ENCLOSURE:
When submitting manuscripts, include a signed statement to read:

To the best of my knowledge the enclosed manuscripts were written by the students whose names they bear. I have submitted work by the following: (Give complete list of students represented)

Doe, John	"Sunrise" (poem)	7th
(name)	(title)	(grade)

(Teacher's Signature)

MANUSCRIPTS MUST BE SENT FIRST-CLASS
POSTMARK NO LATER THAN JANUARY 31, 1978
NO MANUSCRIPTS WILL BE RETURNED.

A CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

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